1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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578
583 142 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN IRELAND
602 but ones in which brothers-in-law flared up to strike one another even though after a week or so the two connections became reconciled.

428 Up to this point we have failed to distinguish between
583 wills and marriage settlements in the statement of match-making and transfer of farms. The confusion is justified because in so many cases they are one and the same. Nevertheless, the subject of wills made apart from the son's marriage needs discussion. If our conclusions as to the nature of farm marriage are valid, something of the same play of changes, obligations, and goods must be present.

Money in the dowry functions to recompense the farmer for his relinquishment of the farm and the break-up of the family which he headed. Similarly, in the cases where inheritance proceeds without marriage, money plays the same role. There are many instances in which the old farmer has demanded payment for the property his heir is to receive. Let an Ennis solicitor describe his experience with one of them:

428 I remember an old fellow, Jimmy B — of K — who was taken
● 763 off dying to the County Home. He called for me to go out there and make a will for him. Seven wills I made for that old codger before he was through. He hadn't any idea of dying. He had only ten or fifteen acres of a farm, but he said he would give it to his son [only] if the son paid him ten pounds a year for it. They often do that, make the son pay from ten pounds to fifty pounds a year for the land. Then [when the solicitor pointed out that the son would inherit the money anyway as the old fellow had no other heirs], old Jimmy made me make another will leaving the money itself to the son.

Another case the authors knew involved no son. The old fellow left a small farm to his cousin and even though he was on the verge of dying, he forced the cousin to pay for it.

In still another instance, an old fellow had some land and about two hundred and fifty pounds to give away. He gave

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the money in a will, but insisted the son pay for the land. 428
After that, there was a cow and a calf left over, which he 763 ●
reserved for himself. When he called in a solicitor to make another will disposing of the cow and calf, this time, as he lay dying in the County Home, the nun in charge said he had been awake all night mumbling to himself about the cow and calf. The solicitor and the nun finally got him to leave the money for masses.

These cases show the hold of the pattern of receiving 428
money for the transfer of family property. It must be understood that under ordinary circumstances the payment the son had to make would be devoted to the other children, as is the dowry. But in these cases the pattern persisted though there were no other children.

Another case occurred in which a farmer named Patrick [429]
N— left money, farm, and everything he had to his nephew Michael in trusteeship to be given to him upon his marriage with the trustee's approval. Here no money was demanded, but another common feature of countrymen's wills was involved which throws light on the general family situation. The old man had other nephews who had given him a hand from time to time in fulfillment of the agricultural pattern. By mischance they discovered the content of the will, called their uncle an "old fraud" and a "robber," and stopped working for him. A generous move on the part of Michael prevented further bad blood.

English law of property gives the owner full right to dispose at will of farm and other real property as personal chattels. That right is, of course, embodied in Irish legal practice. But the situation underlying the Irish farm life is otherwise. In the first cases cited, we see a tendency to enforce payment for the farm, analogous to the dowry. In the last case, the basis for that tendency is the expectation of provision on the part of the family members. With the transfer of the farm and the break of the family at either

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
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Inishbofin

585 "straw-boys" go round with long straw masks on, and if they do not get either money or liquor will threaten to break the windows and furniture of the house. The women marry very young, from fifteen
582 years upwards; and, if not settled in life by twenty or so, they usually emigrate.

Infants are given butter immediately after birth, and are carefully
844 watched, lest they should be "taken away" or changed. For some similar reason a parturient woman has a string tied round the wrist or one of the fingers. All the wood in a house is carefully put outside if
763 the death of one of the inmates is thought to be imminent; and if it should occur the neighbours dread to give wood to make the coffin, as they believe that the person who does so will be the next to die; and if the plank of which the coffin is to be made is not taken down from the loft where it generally is, before the person dies, no inducement can make them use it for the purpose. The people never bury their
764 dead on a Monday, nor on the day of the week in which the Feasts of the Holy Innocents has fallen for that year. They have a great
[762] horror of suicides, and believe that if one were to be buried in the graveyard it would cause the other corpses to turn over on their faces.

A wake is held the night before the funeral, on those who have died abroad or been lost at sea, when the news arrives; but owing to
[178] the influence brought to bear on the people by the clergy in this matter, it is now only attended by relatives of the deceased, and the character of the ceremony is much altered, most of the old games, the mock marriage, &c., being altogether obsolete, while the insobriety, formerly common, is now a thing of the past. At the funeral the coffin
[482] is carried out the back door, and is followed by the mourners. On reaching the graveyard it is carried thrice round the old church in the direction of the sun, and as soon as the grave is reached all those attending the funeral scatter and go to pray at the graves of their own relatives, which, having done, they raise the keen, beginning at the person farthest from the open grave.

The Rev. E. O'Growney, who has generously placed at my disposal a number of notes taken during a visit to these islands, thus describes a funeral he witnessed in Inishbofin:—"The old Irish funeral *caoine* is still used in its full perfection. I happened to be engaged in the church of St. Colman, deciphering a peculiar Latin inscription there, when a large number of people, chiefly women, brought the body of an infant for interment. While the body was being interred the women
764 scattered about the churchyard, each going to the grave of her own
533 friends. Those farthest from the newly-made grave began a low

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

58 not, like an Inishbofin man, consider himself disgraced, nor is he inconsolable.

Engaged couples or newly married people often come in for an amount of attention from the children of the neighbourhood, which, however flattering it may be, is decidedly embarrassing; they are followed about and cheered whenever they appear together. Weddings
585 are occasions of family festivities, and are usually followed by a dance.
533 "Straw-boys" go round to the house on these occasions and take part
292 in the dancing. They are disguised in tall conical-shaped straw masks, adorned with strips of red and green cloth, white shirts decorated with coloured ribbons, and white or red petticoats. The band is headed by a captain and a mate, who enter the house first and declare that they are shipwrecked sailors, and that they have come to dance at the wedding; the captain then dances with the bride, the mate with the bridesmaid, and the rest of the band with the other girls. It is usual to treat the straw-boys to drink, but they often refuse it, and never demand money, or indulge in any rowdy conduct.

591 The young couple usually set up house on their own account, except in the case of the youngest son, who inherits his parents' house and property, in which case the bride goes to live with her people-in-law.

763 When a person is dying, windows and doors are thrown open, and the clock (if there be one) stopped; it is considered unlucky or im-
777 proper for any of those in the house to cry until after the death has actually occured.

764 Wakes are still held in this district, and many of the old observances and games are kept up; but owing to the discouragement of these by the clergy, the people show a great reluctance to give any information on the matter. A good deal of drinking usually takes place on these occasions.

The funeral customs have undergone some change during the past thirty years, but much still remains that is worthy of notice. A grave is not usually dug until the coffin reaches the graveyard, if begun before hand it is never dug on a Monday, or commenced at least, but a start is made, if necessity compels, by raising a few sods on Sunday. It is believed to be unlucky to bury a corpse on New Year's Day, an act
[777] which is thought to bring misfortune to the whole neighbourhood.

The coffin is usually taken out the back door of the house, and conveyed to the cemetery by the longest route. At the graveyard the *caoine* is raised by the women immediately after the religious ceremony

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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when asked why he had not washed behind his ears, replied "'twas too far west!' Death within the year is said to be the fate in Mayo of the man who lengthens a house by adding to the west end.[1] In the old style, as we shall see in the next chapter, houses of more than one storey are rare, though half-lofts or sleeping lofts in the roof lit by a small gable window are fairly common.

A very general feature throughout the north and west is the presence of two doors in the kitchen, one opposite the other (Fig. 8). Only one—the front door—is in regular use: the back door is reserved for days when the wind 'blows contrairy'. Around it more superstition is gathered. A stranger must not be allowed to leave the house by the back door lest he take the luck of the house with him. In the Aran Islands a corpse was always carried out to the graveyard through the back door, and the front door of all houses in the clachan was closed as the funeral procession passed by.[2] The usual explanation of the opposite doors is that they made it possible to regulate the draught for the open fire. This arrangement is characteristic of pastoral areas in western and southern Europe, such as Andalusia and the Roman Campagna. A seventeenth century visitor to Ireland writes: 'the hearth is placed in the middle of the room. The smoke goes through no particular place, but breaks through every part between the sods and wattles of the house, which commonly is no bigger than an overgrown pigstye, to which they have two doors, one always shut on that side where the winds blow'.[3] When chimney flues were added the dispersal of the smoke was facilitated so that the back door tended to go out of use. Nowadays it is often blocked or converted into a window or wall-cupboard. In the traditional kitchen-byre the flagged passage between the doors served as a path for livestock, and the cow was driven out through the back door after milking. I found an interesting relic of this in Co. Armagh, in the custom of taking every new calf, and also any animals purchased at the fair, through the house for luck. In Kerry, 'down to the present day, some houses are the scene of the

[1] C. R. Browne, *The Mullet*.
[2] A. C. Haddon and C. R. Browne, *The Aran Islands*.
[3] 'A Tour in Ireland in 1672–74', *J.C.H.A. Soc.*, 10 (1904), 96.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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doing others; and there is simple symbolic magic in the act of blowing the bellows in a forge to ensure safe delivery. In Mayo a ploughman would be called in to lift and shake a woman in difficult labour,[1] and there are hints of the *couvade* in the custom of wearing the husband's jacket during childbirth in the belief that he will then bear some of the pain. Mothers and babies were thought to be especially liable to be abducted by the fairies, and protective charms were hidden in a baby's dress or placed in the cradle. When children were taken to be baptised, too, special preparations were made and precautions taken, for example, a Co. Antrim clergyman reported that his parishioners would place a piece of bread and cheese in the child's clothing.[2] The old custom of dressing boys in girls' clothes, in long frocks, until they were ten or eleven years of age has been explained as a means of deceiving the fairies, who were always on the lookout for healthy young boys whom they could replace by feeble 'changelings'. For the same reason it is unwise to praise a child without adding a saving 'God bless him', and young boys are still half jocularly referred to as 'rogues and tories'. The belief in 'changelings' may have arisen as an explanation of the high mortality rate among baby boys as compared with girls.

When we come to the topic of the omens and rites of death and burial the supernatural world is ever-present. The custom of opening windows and doors to let the spirit of the dead depart is well known: in addition a hole was sometimes made in the roof thatch. Of Co. Sligo early last century we read: 'As soon as the breath has departed from a sick person, the bed is carried out, and if there be high ground near the house, it is there set on fire and consumed to ashes, while the air resounds with doleful cries.'[3] When death was imminent the sick person was laid on the floor, for this was believed to ease the escaping spirit. Two persons of the household should take part in every necessary task at this time, and two persons were sent out to carry news of the death, traditionally to the livestock and the bees as well as to the neighbours. Great care was taken to

[1] C. R. Browne, *The Mullet*.
[2] Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths*, 2, 39.
[3] W. Shaw Mason, *Parochial Survey*, 2, 368.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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763 observe the correct procedure in laying out the corpse, generally on a table or a door. A plate containing tobacco or salt was placed on the corpse and sometimes a turf, which was believed to prevent decomposition, a transference from the observed preservative qualities of the bogs.

764 786 Although a great deal of information on the wakes which followed has been collected, it is difficult to obtain precise details about the wake games because of their apparent obscenity. Some of them survive as innocent games in districts where wakes have not been entirely suppressed, but it should be stressed that the full ritual of the traditional wake games was carried out in innocence: 'the peasantry who practised them had no idea of outraging propriety or religion in their performance, holding an unquestioning faith that such observances were right and proper at wakes, whilst under any other circumstances they would shrink with horror from such indelicate exhibitions'.[1] Moreover, they were generally 'reserved for the deaths of old people who had survived the ordinary span of life, or young children who could not be looked upon as an irreparable loss.'[2]

Apart from a great variety of informal amusements which were traditional at wake gatherings—riddles, jokes, singing, dancing, horse-play, tricks, feats of strength or agility, wrestling and so on—a list of 190 specific wake games has been collected by Seán Ó Súilleabháin, and it is 'of necessity incomplete.'[3] Some of them were dramatic performances of considerable complexity; and one recalls the Irishman's traditional skill in dramatization. In Kilkenny the principal game was the *frannsa*, a mock ceremony during which several young folk were 'married' by a mock priest, usually a weaver or a tailor, who was dressed in straw and wore a huge straw rope as a stole. 'After each couple was married, he put them to bed in a corner of the room, sprinkled them with water and gave them plain advice about their future conduct as man and wife.'[4] We need not be surprised that, after this initiation, in the words of

[1] J. G. A. Prim, *J.R.S.A.I.* (1853), 334.
[2] J. G. A. Prim, loc. cit.
[3] S. Ó Súilleabháin, *A Handbook of Irish Folklore*, 662.
[4] J. O'Donovan, *J.R.S.A.I.* (1858), 31.

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as their war-goddess,[21] so, before the baptism of King Cairthinn, (first Christian Prince of his House, about A.D. 430), the ancestors of the Dalcassians may have worshipped Aibhinn on her holy hill, and her equally lovely sister Aine, crowned with meadowsweet, on the tamer mound of Knockaney. Whether, if so, they found her already enthroned at Craglea on their conquest of the district, or whether the conqueror Lugad consecrated the mountains to his patroness, it is now impossible to guess. Aibhill, as banshee, held her own. We find her even usurping the place of the "Sybil" in a translation of the *Dies Iræ*,[22] in unwonted companionship with King David, and she was a commonplace of local threnodies during the eighteenth, and even the nineteenth, century. In the lake below Rathblamaic in Inchiquin she has down to recent years been seen, with the twenty-five other banshees of Clare that call her their queen, washing clothes before any impending disaster.[1]

The next appearance of a banshee in local history is of a very different spirit three centuries later. The *Cathreim Thoirdhealbhaigh* ("Triumphs of Torlough") was written probably about A.D. 1350 by Seean mac Craith, the hereditary historian.[23] It contains accounts of three spirit women,—one, the "Sovereignty of Erin," being of surpassing loveliness, and the two others, (if not the same,—"Dismal" and "Water Dismal"), of loathsome hideousness. The hags, however, probably survive, while the "Sovereignty" has perished. Bronach ("the sorrowful or dismal one") of Ceann Boirne was known as the "Hag of Black Head" from the modern name of the older Ceann (or Rinn) of Burren. She was in full repute in 1839, and I have heard of her vaguely about 1885 or 1887. In August, 1317, she

[21] Cf. *Revue Archéologique*, N.S., vol. xviii. (1868), p. 1; Sir Samuel Ferguson's paper, from the Irish point of view, in *Dublin University Magazine*, Oct. 1834, p. 463; W. M. Hennessy, "The War Goddess of the Ancient Irish," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. x., p. 425.

[22] Mss., Royal Irish Academy, 23.M.47.

[23] As yet only in manuscript,—one copy of A.D. 1509, and another probably from one of 1449. For its age see *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxxii., p. 139.

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175 776 763 was able to appear in "the dark before sunrise" and foretell destruction by words and hideous action. The supporters of Prince Murchad O'Brien, (then absent in Dublin), under his brother Dermot invaded the territory of his rival Prince Donchad O'Brien. The latter got together an army, "even the man in a souterrain (*uamh*) of a fort" being summoned, and marched round the site of the modern village of Ballyvaughan, his foe having sheltered in Corcomroe Abbey, in a nook of the bare hills some miles to the north-west. Approaching Lough Rasga, (still known as Rask), "they looked on the shining mere, and there they saw the monstrous and distorted form of a lone, ancient hag, that stooped over the bright Lough shore. She was thatched with elf locks, foxy grey and rough like heather, matted and like long sea-wrack, a bossy, wrinkled, ulcerated brow, the hairs of her eyebrows like fish hooks; bleared, watery eyes peered with malignant fire between red inflamed lids; she had a great blue nose, flattened and wide, livid lips, and a stubbly beard."[24] The writer adds detail on detail (some 90 in all), many too disgusting to copy. The hag was washing human limbs and heads with gory weapons and clothes, till all the lake was defiled with blood, brains, and floating hair. Donchad at last spoke. "What is your name and race, and whose kin are those maltreated dead?" She replied,—"I am Bronach of Burren, of the Tuatha Dé Danann. This slaughter heap is of your army's heads; your own is in the middle." The angry men raised their javelins, but she rose on the wind, yelling more and more words of woe till she vanished. "Heed her not," said Donchad, "she is a friendly *Bodbh* of Clan Torlough" (his opponents). The army hurried on to the ridge of the Abbey, where Donchad and all his kindred, save one brother, were slain before evening.

Not to the Irish alone did the banshee foretell ruin. In May, 1318, Richard de Clare, leader of the Normans, was marching to what he supposed would be an easy victory over the O'Deas of Dysert. The English came to the "glittering, running water of fish-containing Fergus," when they saw a horrible beldam

[24] I have to thank Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady for this and other extracts from the work, the translations in the library of the Royal Irish Academy being, (it is understood), very crude.

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washing armour and rich robes till the red gore churned and splashed through her hands.[35] Calling an Irish ally to question her, De Clare heard that "the armour and clothes were of the English, and few would escape immolation." "I am the Water Doleful One. I lodge in the green fairy mounds (*sidh*) of the land, but I am of the Tribes of Hell. Thither I invite you. Soon we shall be dwellers in one country." Next day De Clare, his son, and nearly all his English troops lay dead upon the fields near the ford of Dysert for miles over the country in their flight.

The belief of the early eleventh and fourteenth centuries is still extant, for local legend near Dysert tells how Aibhill and twenty-five banshees washed blood-stained clothes in Rath Lake before "Claraghmore" (De Clare) fell, and that they still do so when mischief is afoot.[36]

For nearly 300 years there is no other Clare banshee tale, till the famous one of 1642 in the *Memoires of Lady Fanshawe*, (published in 1665).[37] It is so well known that a brief abstract will suffice. Her Ladyship, staying with some of the O'Briens, was sleeping in a room, of which the window overhung water at some height, at a castle, perhaps Bunratty or Castle Lake. She was awakened by a horrible scream, and saw a girl outside the window. The apparition was pale, rather handsome, and with her reddish hair hanging dishevelled over her shoulders. After some time the unwelcome visitor vanished, with other ghastly shrieks. In the morning Lady Fanshawe, telling her tale, was told of the death of a relative of the family whose illness had been concealed from her. The spirit was that of the peasant wife of a former owner of the castle, drowned in the moat by her husband and of evil omen to his descendants.

The next story was told in my own family and, I understand, in that of the Ross Lewins. I have traced it to a daughter of Jane Ross Lewin, one of the girls who saw the banshee. It related to Jane's father, Harrison Ross Lewin of Fortfergus, who probably died in 1776, as his will, dated November, 1775, was proved in

[35] Another "washer of the ford" appears in "Da Choca's Hostel," *Revue Celtique*, vol. xxi. (1900), p. 157, and she is also a Bodbh.

[36] Told me by Prof. Brian O'Looney in 1890, and I have heard more recently of the existence of the belief.

[37] *Loc. cit.*, pp. 83-6.

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175 March, 1777; but I have hitherto been unable to verify the circumstances or place of his death. Mr. Ross Lewin had gone
763 to Dublin on business, the journey at that time taking five days,
776 and the several stages being Limerick, Nenagh, Mountrath, Kildare, and Dublin. In his absence the "young people" went to a friend's house for the evening. The road passed an old church (Kilchrist), which was unenclosed, standing in an open field. As the party returned under bright moonlight, they were startled by loud keening and wailing from the direction of the ruin. Coming in sight, all clearly saw a little old woman with long white hair and a black cloak running to and fro on the top of the side wall, clapping her hands and wailing. The young men, leaving the girls together on the road, sent some of their number to watch each end of the building, and the remainder entered and climbed up on the wall. The apparition vanished as they approached the church, and, after a careful search, could not be found. The party, thoroughly frightened, hurried home, and found their mother in even greater terror. She had been sitting in the window when a great raven flapped three times at the glass, and, while she told them, the bird again flew against the window. Some days later, news arrived from Dublin that Ross Lewin had died suddenly on the very evening of the apparition and omen.

763 It is curious that an English family, no matter how long settled
776 in Ireland, should have acquired the ministration of a banshee, but, besides the Ross Lewins, both the Stamers and the Westropps were so endowed in Clare.[38] The Westropps had also death warnings in the shape of a white owl and the headless coach. This bird last appeared, it is said, before a death in 1909, but it would be more convincing if it appeared at places where the white owl does *not* nest and fly out every night. The banshee has been conspicuously absent of late years, although on the death of my father, the

[38] Among families with banshees, Thomas Crofton Croker (*op. cit.*, ed. 1862, p. 115,) names old Englishry such as the Burkes, Rices, Husseys (the Norman, not the Gaelic, name), Trants, and Kestings. The FitzGeralds of Kerry and Limerick had also a banshee. Of the Clare families the Westropps came from Yorkshire, the Stamers from Essex, and the Lewins probably from Durham. Some banshees may have been acquired by marriage, for the three latter families were related to O'Briens, MacNamaras, and O'Gradys, to name only a part of their Celtic connections.

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late John Westropp, at Attyflin, in 1866, keening and weird lamentation, (probably of some of the country folk who held him in deep affection), were heard the same night by the servants and some of the family. When Mrs. Stamer died at Stamer Park, Ennis, in January, 1883, the banshee and death coach were also supposed to have been heard,—though far more satisfactory explanations of the noises were forthcoming. The popular belief in Clare is that each leading Irish race had a banshee, Eevul, the banshee of the royal O'Briens, ruling over twenty-five other banshees always attendant on her progresses. The stream from Caherminaun to Dough, (the Daelach), was called the "Banshee's Brook," and when, as sometimes happens after an unusually dry summer, the water gets red from iron scum, everyone is on the alert to hear the rustling flight of the banshee, (not apparently Eevul), and her attendants through the air. In the prevailing suspense someone generally succeeds, and then there is unrest and fear until a death removes the uncertainty. There are many other modern tales of banshees. Mr. Casey of Ruan heard a banshee cry at the death of his father. The late Dr. MacNamara of Corofin was similarly honoured; indeed, when his family lived at Ballymarkahan, near Quin, there were numerous "authentic instances" recorded. The Corofin banshees, however, did not lag behind the age by maintaining aristocratic prejudices, for one, at least, used to sit near the cross road leading to the workhouse and foretell the deaths of the poor inmates.[29]

The most recent visit of a banshee told to me was in 1905,[30] and is sadly tame when compared with the stories of MacCraith and Lady Fanshawe. Some scattered cottages form a sort of suburb to Newmarket-on-Fergus at a temporary lake (or *turlough*) called Lough Gaish. The inhabitants were greatly alarmed by the loud and ghastly wailing of some unknown being on several successive nights. Local panic spread, and few ventured out after dark. Had any tragedy happened, the reputation of the banshee would have rested on a rock of belief for another generation; but nothing occurred, and it is now doubted "whether it was a banshee at all, at all."

[29] Told to Dr. G. U. MacNamara at Caherminane and Corofin.
[30] By Mrs. and Miss Neville and Miss G. C. Stacpoole of Newmarket.

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III. *The Death Coach.*[31]

763 787 The "headless Coach" or "coach a bower" seems of far later date than the banshee. Ghostly chariots such as that of Cuchulain figure in very early tales, but neither their appearance nor their sound foretold death.[32] In Clare, at sight or sound of the coach, all gates should be thrown open, and then it will not stop at the house to call for a member of the family, but only foretell the death of some relative at a distance.[33]

763 I collected five stories, three of well-defined character, and give them in order of time as the dates can be fixed. The first appearance, on the night before June 18th, 1806, was related to my three informants[34] most solemnly by their fathers and uncles. Two told it in a general and confused way, but varied from the story of the third, which I give, only by omissions. Ralph Westropp, of Attyflin and Lismehane,—the latter place is in Clare, but I never could learn where he died,—lay sick unto death. His sons in the late dusk waited on the steps for the arrival of the doctor. Suddenly they saw and heard a large coach drive into the paved court before the house. One of them stepped down to open the door, but the dark object rumbled past and drove down the long, straight avenue, which was fenced on both sides. Two of the watchers ran after it, hearing it ahead of them. The noise stopped, and they expected to find the coach at the gate. They ran full tilt against the bars, the gate being closed and locked. They called up the lodgekeeper, and he was found to have been asleep with the keys still beside him. The sick man died the next morning.

Lismehane, under its later name of Maryfort, afterwards became the residence of the O'Callaghan family, its present occupants. On the night of April 29th, 1821, two servants,—one of whom was "Matty Halloran" who died not long ago at an advanced

[31] Cf. "Irish Folklore from Cavan, Meath, Kerry, and Limerick," vol. xix., pp. 320-1; vol. x., p. 119.

[32] Is not the death coach, and not the Hellequin, the "hell waine" of Reginald Scot's list of spirits in *The discoverie of witchcraft*, Bk. vii., cap. xv.?

[33] Cf. Herefordshire belief about corpse candles.

[34] The late Capt. Ralph Westropp of Coolreagh (in 1879), and the late Mrs. Wilme and Mrs. Fitzalan, whose fathers were present.

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age, and the other was a butler named Richard Burke,—were sitting up to receive a son of the family, Cornelius O'Callaghan, who had travelled for his health in vain and was returning home. Halloran, who told the tale with fearless faith and weary frequency, said that the heavy rumble of a coach roused them. Burke stood on the top of the long flight of steps with a lamp, and sent Halloran down to open the carriage door. He reached out his hand to do so, saw a skeleton looking out, gave one yell, and fell in a heap. When the badly-scared Burke picked him up, there was no sign or sound of any coach. A little later the invalid arrived, so exhausted that he died suddenly in the early morning. The present generation seems to have got the story from Halloran alone.

On the night of December 11th, 1876, a servant of the MacNamaras was going his rounds at Ennistymon, a beautiful spot in a wooded glen, with a broad stream falling in a series of cascades. In the dark he heard the rumbling of wheels on the back avenue, and, knowing from the hour and place that no "mortal vehicle" could be coming, concluded that it was the death coach and ran on, opening the gates before it. He had just time to open the third gate and throw himself on his face beside it, at the bank, before he "heard a coach go clanking past." It did not stop at the house, but passed on, and the sound died away. On the following day Admiral Sir Burton MacNamara died in London.[25]

A man living at Annaghneale was returning from Tulla late at night. As he reached the corner of Fortanne demesne he heard a heavy rumbling behind him, and horses trotting. Surprised after a time by its not coming nearer, he looked back and saw a large dark mass with a figure on the box. It came no closer to him, and in a fright he hurried on. At a bend in the road he ventured to stand at the fence and look again. This time he saw the horses and carriage drive over the wall and ditch into Fortanne. He fell, nearly insensible with terror, but, hearing and seeing nothing more, hurried home. This was told to a steward at Maryfort about twenty years ago, and happened "long after the sale of Fortanne" to its present owner in 1879. The present tradition

[25] From Mr. R. Twigge, F.S.A., whose wife is a daughter of the House of Ennistymon.

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763 of Fortanne says that the coach was heard at the deaths of certain Westropps after 1873, but nothing happened after its last appearance.

The phantom of a coach and horse was seen not far from Corofin, at Cragmoher, not long since, but it is agreed that no death took place after the apparition. An equally vague story was told about 1870 at Attyflin by a very old woman, Norry Halloran, whom the sound of the coach pursued one dark evening for a long way, but it did not pass her door, and nothing happened afterwards.

IV. *Fairies and Fairy Forts and Mounds.*

776 823 [538] MacCraith, in the *Triumphs of Torlough*, in describing the prognostics of the death of Prince Donchad early in the fourteenth century says that "lights shone on the fairy forts," and it has already been noted that the *sidhs* or fairy mounds were lodgings of appalling apparitions, like Bronach when not at her proper residence in the lower deep. The *Dindsenchas*,—that early encyclopædia invaluable for everything but the reliable account of the origin of place names which it purports to be,—describes how a lady dwelling in such a mound sprang out at her would-be lover in the form of a dragon.[36] Probably such beliefs, and the consequent fear of irate and deadly beings in earthworks, have helped until recent years to preserve the residential earthen "forts," although the ring walls were destroyed with but little scruple. Nevertheless the son of a farmer named Nihill told me in 1892 that, after some days wreckage and removal of the outer wall of the fine triple stone fort of Cahercalla, near Quin, his father was stricken with acute pain, and only recovered from his illness when the work was stopped,—whence this interesting ruin has been preserved to the present day. A certain landlord, still living, nearly lost the use of one eye from the dust of an explosion when blasting a rock in an earth fort which was being removed, and this incident has upheld the faith and fear of the fairies in north-eastern Clare. A locally famous "astronomer" and weather prophet tried, many years ago, to blast a dolmen in Inchiquin Barony, and a splinter hit his hand, which was badly injured and

[36] *Revue Celtique*, vol. xv., p. 441.

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house. The old residences are in ruins, and their desertion took place over sixteen years ago.[16] 775

It is to the credit of the people of Eastern Clare that it possesses hardly any haunted houses, but there are two of transcending interest.

The first lay near the Fergus. A footstep followed one at night on the upper stairs, and curtains were drawn round the old-fashioned beds,—if not by "a hand of bone," at least by a "thing that no man sees." On more than one occasion all the bed-clothes were lifted, "as if by four people," off a sleeper. Even the late Mr. Richard Stacpoole, a man of iron nerve, told how once on a visit this happened to him; indignant at what he supposed to be a foolish joke, he got up, locked the door, searched the room, and kept awake, only to find the action repeated twice; he struck a light at once, but no one was visible. Hands were laid on the doors and their handles. Anyone who "married into" the family or its connections was liable to have their hands kissed in the dark on their first visit. An invisible dog used to howl before deaths, being only heard from the room of the relation of the foredoomed person. A ghost, (said to be of no less a person than Maureen Rhue, the famous Amazonian O'Brien of 1640-50), used to pass up and down the long, straight avenue. Legend said that, after the murder of her twenty-fifth husband,—(only three husbands are known to history, which is also ignorant of their murders),—she was fastened into a hollow tree and starved to death. There were also the ghosts of two nuns,—for the place was said to have been a convent, without a particle of evidence,[17]—and, in 1838, a lady on horseback at a "Druid's Altar." (The last-named was probably a pure invention of the then owner.) There was, however, another ghostly object of which I heard from an eye-witness still living. A dark spot used to break out in the wall of a quaint old brick-floored room, with an inside window looking down into the kitchen. The legend was that an old nurse, a pensioner of the family about 1750, used to live in this room, and died, aged over 90, suddenly [763] [773]

[16] So Mrs. MacDonnell.

[17] Except that skeletons, and, it is said, crucifixes, were found in the garden just beside the house.

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Water Cattle.—I have not found a water-bull legend clearly told in Clare, but cow's horns are seen over the waters of one lake and "something roared" under the waters of another.[18] In 1877 I heard of cattle coming out of some lake near Kilkishen, (perhaps Cullaun, with its enchanted city or palace), but I could not recover the story when searching twenty years later. "*Loch na bó girre* which is called *loch Grétine*" is given[19] as an old name for the large lake of Lough Graney in the Aughty mountains on the north border of Clare. This probably implies that it had a legend like that of Lough bo Girr, near Cahir in County Tipperary, whence an enormous long-horned cow used to issue.

Púcas and Horses.—Though the *púca* has influenced very often the place-names of Clare, its legends in the county are dry and vague. One man near Clonlara had the misfortune to become its sport. It took the form of a pony, and, finding the man searching for treasure in a gravel-pit, in which he had dreamed that gold was concealed, bore him away on a long rough ride and dropped him at the spot from which it started, where he was found bruised and insensible next morning.[20] The *púca* also appears as a hideous goat. I was told by a servant, about 1870, of a demon "black puck-goat with fiery eyes" appearing to a poor country woman on a roadside bank in the Cratloe hills.[21] The tale was very blood-curdling, but, doubtless to my relief then but regret now, I put it out of mind, and now forget its details. The *púca* always puts its hoof on the blackberries at Michaelmas, after which they become unfit to eat.[22]

Of spirit horses other than the *púca*, I have heard of one at a deep gravel quarry, near Trough in the same hills. The ghostly presentment of a Limerick gentleman, a Mr. Furnell, appeared one moonlight night on horseback. He rode at full gallop, with

[18] I think Lough Breeda, east from Tulla, and Clonlea Lake were intended. I am to blame for not making a note at the time, but was only interested in the legend. My notes only begin in 1878, though embodying earlier matter, and are too often "car notes" from drivers and others and not properly hunted. Where possible, I re-examined them from 1892 upwards.

[19] In the "Agallamh," *Silva Gadelica*, vol. ii., p. 126.

[20] So the late Sir Hugh Dillon Massy at Doonass.

[21] So Mrs. O'Shea at Clounse, Limerick.

[22] Cf. similar English belief as regards the devil.

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776 hounds in full cry, and the sound of horns, across the upper field, leaped the fence, and disappeared into the quarry with a crash and
763 groan. Mr. Francis Drew of Drewsborough, who was driving past with a friend, recognised and called to the ghostly rider; when he saw the supposed accident, he ran into the quarry, but could find nothing. Next day he heard of the death of the hunter, but far away from the quarry.[23]

776 Supernatural, but evidently material, were the horses which came out of the caves of Kilcorney in the heart of the Burren,[24] for they left descendants, noted for their high spirits and fierceness, by earthly mares in the valley. A similar tale of sea-horses coming out of Galway Bay was told some thirty-five years since, and we owned a reputed scion of their race, a cob from Connemara on the opposite side of the Bay.

Dogs.—One spectral dog haunts the road between Carrigaholt and Ross in the long peninsula of the Irrus, and is believed to be the spirit of a comparatively recent local celebrity, "Robin of Ross," of whom many tales are told. He was a member of the Keane family, and one version makes his ghost a different dog from the one near Carrigaholt.[25] Another dog accompanies a human ghost on its nightly patrol between the railway bridge and the cemetery at the venerable church and shattered round tower of Dromcliff. The precincts of Ennistymon House were haunted by the spectre of a large black hound, quite harmless.[26] Once very famous, but now nearly forgotten, was the ghostly "Black Dog of Cratloe." Many believed that they had seen the apparition, which used often to accompany the D'Esterre's coach and the mail car. My mother and my brother Ralph Hugh Westropp, who travelled through the great floods of the Shannon on February 1st, 1869, told a very circumstantial tale of the dog.[27]

[23] So the late Capt. Ralph Westropp, from Mr. Drew.

[24] *Ordnance Survey Letters*, (Co. Clare), vol. i., p. 236; cf. Gough, *Camden*, vol. iv., p. 366.

[25] So the MacDonnells and a driver named Russell. "Robin" lived in the early eighteenth century.

[26] So Mrs. Twigge.

[27] My mother in her diary notes,—"Drove home through several floods, the worst at Bunratty.... Saw the phantom dog at Cratloe."

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Griffin, of men starting seaward to reach its fairy shores, and never returning. 773

Another magic island was Kilstuitheen, or Kilstuiffen, in Liscannor Bay. On the southern shore, in 1839, there was said to have been an ecclesiastical city swallowed up by the earthquake that split Innis Fitae into the present three islands,[84] which suggests derivation from O'Conor's then recent version of the various Irish Annals. On the northern shore the tradition was fuller. Kilstuitheen sank when its chieftain lost its golden key in battle, nor will it be restored until the key is recovered from its hiding place, some say, under the ogham-inscribed gravestone of "Conan" on Mount Callan. (When that place was dug out only bones and rusted iron were found.)[85] The island, with its golden-roofed palaces, churches, and towers, may at times be seen shining far below the waves, but once in seven years it rises above them, and those who see it then are said to die before its next appearance. The fishermen [731] [763]

> "point how high the billows roll above lost Kilsaeen,
> Its palaces and towers of pride
> All buried in the rushing tide
> And deep-sea waters green."[86]

Comyn, in *The Adventures of the Three Sons of Thorailbh* (1750), connects it with the raid of Crochaun, Dahlin, and Sal in the time of Finn and their defeat of Ruidin, Ceannir, and Stuithin. Legend near Lehinch places the battle at Bohercrochaun. A pretty legend in 1878 told how those rowing over the sunken island smell the flowers of its fields through the waters.[87]

[84] Annals of Ulster, Clonmacnoise, and the Four Masters; *Ordnance Survey Letters*, (Co. Clare), vol. i., p. 304.

[85] *The Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, ser. ii., vol. i. (1872), pp. 269 *et seq.*

[86] *Monks of Kilcrea.*

[87] *Ordnance Survey Letters*, (Co. Clare), vol. i., pp. 300-4, vol. ii., pp. 74, 99; *Handbook to Lisdoonvarna* (1896), p. 64; *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. xxx., p. 289; *Journal of the Limerick Field Club*, vol. iii., p. 197, where I have collected the materials at some length. Other sunken monasteries and churches are alleged at Monaster Letteragh, off the coast of Mayo, and the Cantillons' Church in Ballyheigue Bay in Kerry. I do not regard the story in the *Irish Penny Journal*, vol. i., p. 362, by J. Geraghty MacTeague, as anything but a work of fiction; it is very artificial,

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777 the hens from laying more; this is held at least near Tulla and Sixmilebridge, but seems dying out near the former place.

XIII. *Omens, Dreams, and Divination.*

787 *Omens.*—It is an unlucky sign to meet "a stranger woman with red hair," or a hare, or a fox, when setting out in the morning. A poem by Andrew MacCurtin, as already noted,[4] condoles with Father MacDonnell, a Franciscan living in Corcomroe, for the loss of his horse, and suggests that the *garran* [562] fell a victim to the evil eye or to the look of a red-haired woman. A sign much feared in north-east Clare is the flying of a bat into one's face, which forebodes sickness. A robin, a stray cat, or [763] a cricket coming into a house is lucky, but some regard the last as a sign of death,—though this belief is rare and perhaps imported, for in Dublin "the ever-faithful cricket" is also a death omen. If the right ear tingles some one is praising you, and if the left someone is abusing you. If the right hand itches you will lose money, and if the left you will receive it, providing you rub or scratch it on wood. Any one of these omens from itching is good after sunset, and rubbing the right hand on wood saves the situation or the money in either case. To get dirt on [777] one is most lucky,—"the dirtier the better." To stumble upstairs, and to be looked at by a cat after it has washed its face, are signs of approaching marriage.

Dreams.—It is most unlucky to dream of church or clergy, and, above all, of the sacraments. To dream of a cat foretells an enemy; of a dog, a friend; of crows or filth, riches and plenty; of silver, disappointment; and of dirty or stormy water, trouble. Cheap dream books have corrupted local belief so much that it is now almost impossible to separate the older dream lore.

Divination.—I have not found many methods of foretelling the future, but the following were of such common knowledge that I need cite no single authorities. On All Hallows Eve, I remember, before 1870, a blindfolded person would touch one of several saucers in which were respectively earth, water, salt, a bean, etc., symbolising death, emigration, luck, marriage, etc., in

[4] Vol. xxi., p. 196.

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825 776 enchanted human beings.[4] It gets more definite above Galway Bay, where the Kinealeys are of reputed seal descent. Some such belief may underlie the name Cumarra (or sea-hound) in the MacNamara family. I found more difficulty in getting fisher beliefs in recent years than in getting folklore from the country people. Much of what I heard in 1906 was probably of tourist origin, and, like the *merrow* at Killard,[5] not to be trusted as genuine belief.

Otter.—Beyond vague belief in an enormous "durracow"[6] (the king of the otters), which I heard of as a child on the Shannon Bank about some unnamed lake in east Clare, I am not aware of any folklore about this creature in the county. There was said to be a "remarkable" otter at Glenomera.

Cat.—The cat was much regarded by the early Irish, and holds honourable place in their ancient code of laws. It even appears in the illuminations of the *Book of Kells*. Numerous places in Clare bear its name, but local belief tends to consider the "cat" in these names as a weird monster. The "Cata" and "Faracat" of legend[7] were probably "dragons." The cat has supernatural knowledge. If a cat looks fixedly at a person without apparent reason it forebodes sickness or death, but if it does so to an unmarried person, after making its toilet, it foretells marriage.

[1763 1787]

[4] So in Aed Baclamp from the *Book of Lismore*, (*Silva Gadelica*, vol. ii., p. 72), St. Brendan changes 50 seals into horses, which carry into the sea their riders, who, on reaching it, are, like their steeds, changed into seals.

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[5] Vol. xxi., p. 342. Mrs. Dorothea Townshend of Oxford calls my attention to the probability that this story was made up by Dr. Keightley (v. App. to his *Fairy Mythology*). In my original Ms. I expressed great doubt as to this story, having found no equivalent to it near Dunbeg or Kilkee, but this was unfortunately omitted in publication. The Miltown mermaid was probably one of the white seals occasionally seen on the coast.

[6] *I.e. Dobharchu*, water-hound. The Irish called the wolf *fasl-chu* (wild hound) and *cu allaid*, and the marten *crann chu* (branch hound). The more common name for the wolf in Clare is *bruagh*, as in Breaghva and Breffy, the name of several townlands. The other wolf name *Mac Tire* (son of the country), is attached to Knockaunvicteera hill near Lisdoonvarna (where it refers to the animal), and to Cahermactire, a fort near Inchiquin Hill; at the latter place it may refer to a person, as the name Mac Tire is found in various annals.

[7] Vol. xxi., pp. 477-9.

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Upper Bunratty, the fields being covered with them, but, when it broke up, the "troops" dispersed, and no bands were seen at any distance from the rendezvous. A rat was "heard talking with the Devil" in the grave of an unpopular person before 1875, but how the holders of this curious conversation were identified was never stated. I have met a belief in speaking rats in eastern Clare and among fishermen at Kilkee.

Hedgehog.—This animal is reputed to steal apples and suck cows and eggs, so that it is persecuted and called *grainoge* (little ugly thing).

Birds.—A pair of ravens roosted in a top window of the round tower of Iniscatha (Scattery) early in the last century. The birds were said to escort their young, when fully fledged, across the Shannon to Carrigfoile Castle in Kerry, and not to let them return to the island.[15] Scaldcrows (roystons) are considered unlucky, and much feared. The old Irish regarded them as incarnations of the war-goddess Bodbh.[16] Birds as omens have already been noted.[17] The bat is looked on as a sort of bird, and it is ominous of death for it to fly at one's face. The entry of a robin into a house is a death omen near Tulla, but elsewhere a sign of good fortune. Although swans are so plentiful that I have often seen more than forty together in Inchiquin and other lakes, the only folklore associated with them seems to be a tale of swan-maidens at Inchiquin. The hunting of the wren has been described in Section XIV.[18]

Fishes.—It was regarded as a custom among the fishermen of Kilrush and Scattery that no one should go fishing for three days after the arrival of the herring shoals, but, when the first day dawned, a crowd of boats was always discovered, and much quarrelling resulted.[19] As the shoals arrived, a mass used to be celebrated on the shore at Kilmurry, Ibrickan, to secure good

[15] *Dublin University Magazine*, vol. xviii., p. 546.

[16] *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. x.; *Revue Celtique*, vol. i.; Joyce, *Social History of Ireland*, vol. i., p. 267.

[17] Vol. xxi., p. 190.

[18] *Ante*, pp. 206-7, and Plate IX.

[19] Hely Dutton, *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare* (1808), pp. 228, 259.

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Senan "built seven churches and a beautiful high belfry" there, and how "St. Caimin, a vigorous chieftain, erected seven churches and a high belfry" on Lough Derg. Legend told that St. Senan, while building his tower, was interrupted by a woman, and left it unfinished.[10] St. Blawfugh (Blathmac) built two towers at Rathblamac, one of which was stolen and brought to Dysert O'Dea by St. Manawla. Of the bells of Dromcliff and Kilnaboy towers I have already told.[11] Kilnaboy tower was broken down by "the bombardment of Cromwell." The round tower at Tomgraney was faintly remembered, in Petrie's time, as like that on Iniscaltra, but it has long since been forgotten.

Crosses and monuments.—I have already mentioned the cross of Dysert O'Dea,[12] which was unusual in having portions of its carvings on separate pieces of stone, some of which are lost. The cross fell twice, and was re-erected by Conor Crone O'Dea in 1683 and by Col. Synge of Mount Callan in 1872; each benefactor died in the year following his restoration of the cross. The breaking off or fall of any portion of the monument of Sir Donal O'Brien, the first of the baronets of Dromoland, in Kilnasoolagh church, is fatal to his descendants, and so is any attempt to clean or repair it, tradition alleging that one of the O'Briens always dies in either case.[13] My own family believed that, if the family vault were opened, it had soon to be opened twice again to receive new occupants.

Underground passages.—One is said to lead from Cahercrochaun to Dundahlin on Loop Head, and another from the great promontory fort of Dundoillroe eastwards, where a brown track, probably an old road, still remains. A third ran through Barnagoskaigh to the Tuamnagoskaigh in Ballynahown, near Lisdoonvarna, where there is a roofed cleft of some length. A fourth went from Bealboruma fort under the Shannon; through it the angry Brian Boru sent soldiers to waylay and kill his slandered

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 18. The same tale is told of St. Declan and the beautiful perfect round tower of Ardmore, County Waterford.

[11] Vol. xxii., p. 336; *Ordnance Survey Letters* (Co. Clare), vol. i., p. 144.

[12] Vol. xxii., pp. 57, 456.

[13] The fall of an angel not long before the death of the late Lord Inchiquin greatly strengthened the belief.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

ing souls of children and leaving in their place changelings, who gradually sicken and die. Since boys are favored over girls, Irish peasants of the region until recently dressed their male offspring in petticoats, sometimes up to the age of 18 years, to deceive the little people. Even now parents are loath to praise the health or beauty of their children for fear that the gentry will overhear and be prompted to victimize their souls.

Solitary fairies are described by Yeats as "withered, old, and solitary, in every way unlike the sociable [trooping fairies]. . . . They dress with all unfairy homeliness, and are, indeed, most sluttish, slouching, peering, mischievous phantoms" (Yeats ND :76). The long occupation of Inis Beag by leprechauns is evidenced by the Garden of the Cobbler and a spring at the back of the island, shaped like the sole of a shoe, which is known as Well of the Boot. Occasionally a leprechaun has been seen in the former location, but only the sound of a tapping hammer has been heard in the latter. Instead of guarding a buried pot of gold at the foot of a rainbow, as popularly conceived, the leprechaun of Inis Beag possesses a small purse in which he keeps but a single coin. Children sometimes are urged to hunt for the hidden purse, as a distraction by harassed parents. The rift valley between Castle and High Villages is thought to be the home of at least one "red man." He wears a pointed cap to denote cleverness and has a laugh, as distinctive as the hammering of the leprechaun, by which his presence is known. A practical joker with poltergeist qualities, the red man prefers to frequent houses, where his mischief is countered with bottles of holy water. From November of 1959 until June of 1963, my wife and I experienced, first in Inis Beag and then in our home in the United States, the antics of an unseen being who opened doors and windows, turned on lights and water faucets, and imbibed our Irish whiskey. Tongue-in-cheek, we placed the blame for these uncanny occurrences on an amiable solitary fairy who had attached himself to us, but eventually I felt compelled to report our unique contact with the Celtic supernatural to the anthropological community—a gesture regarded as "poison oak in the scientific groves of academe" (Messenger 1962:367–373).

The spiritual omens of death are three in Inis Beag: the sound of trooping fairies building a coffin for the victim, soft tapping on the window pane of his bedroom, and the wailing of the banshee during the night before his demise. No one has ever viewed the banshee, but many have heard her cry out in the night, and the keen of Celtic derivation is said to be an imitation of her funeral call. She attaches herself only to certain families which inherit her patrilineally. An aged Inis Beag man was seriously ill with influenza on the night that my wife and I sponsored a dancing party, and a young man departing from it three hours after midnight played his accordion as he walked to his home located near that of the sick person. On learning of this event, the nurse shortly after dawn hurried to her patient to assure him that the wails he might have heard came from the instrument of the inexpert youth and not from the family banshee; at this news, thanatomania was prevented and the man lived another three weeks, when the banshee at last cried and was heard by those at his deathbed. Opinion is divided as to whether it is the fairies or the banshee who announce death by window tapping, but as a practical joke islanders long ago used to tap on the bedroom windows of those persons considered overly superstitious.